



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Beaumont welding supply executive, others, sentenced for illegal disposal of hazardous waste

BATON ROUGE – A Beaumont, Texas, welding supply business owner and two former employees were sentenced Thursday in connection with conspiracy to violate the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

In March, John Charles Mazoch, 47, of Beaumont, owner of Coastal Welding Supply, pled guilty to the felony offense of conspiracy to violate the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Thursday, Mazoch was sentenced to 8 months in federal prison and ordered to pay a \$500,000 fine and more than \$700,000 in restitution to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality by U.S. District Judge Marcia Crone. His sentence includes eight months of home confinement as a condition of 3 years of supervised release once he is released from federal prison.

James Hebert, 48, of Sulphur; and Steven Mark Sample, 43, of Cleaver, Mo., two of Mazoch's former employees at Coastal Welding Supply, also pled guilty to participation in the conspiracy, and were both sentenced to six months of home confinement, probation, fines and 200 hours of community service.

Through a joint investigation by the Criminal Investigation Divisions of the EPA and DEQ, investigators uncovered the conspiracy in January 2006, when approximately 555 compressed gas cylinders containing Cyanide, Cyanogen, Boron Trichloride, Hydrogen Chloride and several other forms of industrial gases were discovered in a self-storage facility in Sulphur. Investigators determined that the storage unit had been rented by Hebert and that Mazoch, through Sample, had paid Hebert to remove and empty the cylinders from Coastal Welding Supply's facility in Sulphur. Sample coordinated the payment to Hebert and signed off on a document purporting that Coastal Welding was selling all of the cylinders to Hebert for \$10 total.

"This is a good example of what happens when someone tries to take a shortcut instead of following the environmental laws and regulations," said DEQ Secretary Harold Leggett. "You may save money in the short run, but fines and possible jail time can offset cost savings in the long run. The environmental regulations are in place to be protecting of human health and the environment. For those who try to bypass the regulations, the financial and personal costs can be expensive."

The storage unit was cleaned up in February 2006, through a contractor with the Environmental Protection Agency. This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Noble.